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ABSTRACT

Alcohol use and abuse has received extensive attention, with recent concerns focused on the use and abuse of alcohol by adolescents and young adults. Alcohol use has become one of the major rituals in the rites of passage from childhood to adulthood. Anthropologists have documented the importance of rites of passage rituals for marking the successful passage from one position in a social structure to another. Rites of passage include the three phases of separation, transition, and reaggregation. There are many rituals, some formalized and common throughout this culture and others common within certain subcultures and ethnic groups and still others less formal or only practiced within certain subgroups. This culture has had a tendency to decrease the observation of rites of passage rituals. Sanctioned initiation rituals can provide increased satisfaction, dedication and persistence among students completing their education, and can also benefit the system by reducing the number of unsanctioned, dangerous, addictive rituals that are required of new students by upperclass students. The challenge is to help young people find or devise appropriate and rigorous rituals that will permit youth to demonstrate and to prove their worthiness to be considered and accepted as members of new groups without resorting to dangerously addictive and permanently debilitating ritual activities. Appropriately sanctioned passage rites offer a viable and constructive alternative to accomplish this challenge. (ABL)

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Alcohol Use by Adolescents and Young Adults: A Rite of Passage to Adulthood

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Introduction

Alcohol use and abuse in our culture and society has received extensive attention for over a century and a half. More recent concerns have been focused on the use and abuse by adolescents and young adults, an age group with whom, I assume, most of us work or are concerned. It is this issue with this group about whom I want to share some thoughts today. I will touch here only on some obvious reasons why alcohol use and abuse are a concern.

Addictiveness
Injuriousness
- Physically
- Emotionally
- Mentally
- Socially

Deadliness

It is being used regularly by persons at younger and younger ages, some as young as 3rd or 4th graders, 8 or 9 years old--prior to an age of emotional and physical maturity, with increasing, evidence of emotional and physical impairment, and even death. Examples include an Arkansas City youth, 16 years of age and two McPherson youth, 16-17 years of age, all of whom were killed, recently, as a result of intoxication.

At the outset I want to make it clear that this session is intended to raise questions and to challenge your creative thoughts about this perplexing problem, rather than to provide nice, neat answers. If I'm successful, maybe someone here today can help formulate a better solution than we seem to have at the present. I'll mention more about this later.

During my years as Vice President for Student Services I began to ponder, mostly to myself, the importance and meaning of the seemingly insatiable behavior of a large number of students, both college and high school, as well as some adults, to consume apparently large amounts of alcohol on a regular basis. Interactions with student services personnel on other campuses as well as a perusal of both the public press and professional

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literature have substantiated that what I was observing was not an isolated phenomenon in central Kansas. Clearly, there is a national (international) concern with the direction we are headed, or maybe more accurately, the place in which we find ourselves.

Consistent with the increased concern about alcohol use and abuse has been numerous solutions to abate or control the "problems" associated with alcohol use and abuse. These can be classified as follows:

1. Abolition - Enact laws against use, enforce the laws, punish the offenders.
2. Education - Voluntary compliance due to knowledge of dangers of use and misuse.
3. Legalization - Make alcohol easily available, reduce its mystic, teach responsible use (Jaschik, 1990).

Education and abolition have been the most frequent approaches to stem the use and abuse of alcohol. Evidence to date leaves one with the impression that little if any significant changes are being effected.

Legalization has been harder to assess. Most proponents point to the effects of the prohibition legislation early in this century and their subsequent defeat as evidence that better control and less abuse is possible when substances are legally available.

The seriousness of the problems of drug abuse on the national level became more focused with the "Just Say No" campaign suggested by Former First Lady, Nancy Reagan and the establishment by President Bush of the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the appointment of William Bennett as its first director.

These events, coupled with my earlier musings suggested to me that maybe we were not looking in the right place, or we were not starting at the right place, if there is such a place. Rather than ask, "How can we control, or prohibit drug (alcohol use and abuse)," perhaps we should ask, "Why is alcohol use and abuse so important? What makes it so attractive, or so desirable?" Where is the "force" or the "pressure" to consume? Part of the rationale for "legalization" is based on the notion that if alcohol is easily and readily available, it will lose some of its attractiveness, the challenge of obtaining the "forbidden fruit" will be removed.

As I began to think about why the use and abuse of alcohol seems so important in our culture, and what makes it so desirable to so many people, the characteristics of rites of passage came to mind. As I thought about this and began to read more about alcohol use and abuse, and the roles that rituals and rites of

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passage play in cultures, I have become more intrigued with the hypothesis that alcohol use and abuse has taken on the characteristics of a ritual. As such it has become one of the major rituals in the rites of passage from childhood to adulthood in our culture.

I hope this brief introduction will provide a vantage point and a base of understanding for what I will be presenting and proposing during the remainder of our time today. After my general presentation, I will be inviting input from you.

Rites of passage

Rites of passage were first identified by a Belgium Anthropologist, Arnold van Gennep (1909, 1960) at the beginning of the twentieth century. He observed "that certain kinds of rituals around the world had similar structures. These were rituals associated with the movement, or passage, of people from one position in the social structure to another: births, initiations, confirmations, weddings, funerals, and the like" (Schultz and Lavenda, 1987, p. 141). These observations led then, to the concept of rites of passage.

Rituals and rites of passage as used by anthropologists are defined as follows:

I. Rituals
  A. Definitions
    1. Behavior that is formal, stylized, repetitive, stereotyped, and performed earnestly as a social act (Oswalt, 1986, p. 380).
    2. Behavior that is symbolic, and has a predefined, sequential nature which is generated by a specific set of ideas (or reasons) (Schultz and Lavenda, 1987, pp. 140-141).
  B. Characteristics
    "Because rituals are actions (or behaviors), we must pay attention to the way the ritual is actually carried out, as well as to the text (the particular sequential ordering of acts, utterances and events) that the ritual is to follow."
  C. Purpose (or why rituals)
    "Through ritual performance the ideas of a culture become concrete, take on a form ...(and) give direction to the group of participants. Our understanding of the world does not come merely from mind, but rather from a coming together of mind, emotion and body" (Schultz and Lavenda, 1987, p. 141).

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D. Examples:
Children's birthday party
Scientific experiment
College graduate ceremony
Procedure in court of law
Preparation a baseball hitter follows before stepping in the batters box
Pledge night in fraternity
Bridal shower
A wedding
A bar or bat mitzvah
Catholic Mass
(Schultz and Lavenda, 1987, p. 141).

II. Rites of Passage
A. Definition
"...rituals associated with the movement, or passage, of people from one position in the social structure to another..." (Schultz and Lavenda, 1987, p. 141). (Childhood to Adulthood)
B. Characteristics
Rites of passage are characterized by three (3) phases
1. Separation phase - "Comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a "state"), or from both" (Turner, 1969, p. 94). It involves "separation from the old position and from normal time, in which the ritual passenger leaves behind symbols and practices of his or her previous position" (Schultz and Lavenda, 1987, p. 141).
Examples: Induction into military
Going away to college
Pledging a fraternity/sorority organization
Joining a fraternal or secret society (Masons, Elks, PEO, Shriners)

2. Transition, marginal or "liminal" phase - "During the intervening 'liminal' period the characteristics of the ritual subject (the passenger) are ambiguous; he (she) passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (Turner, 1969, p. 94). "...the ritual passenger is neither in his (her) old life or in his (her) new one. This period is marked by rolelessness, ambiguity and perceived danger. It is often a

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period in which the person or persons involved are subjected to ordeal by those who have already passed through" (Schultz and Lavenda, 1987, p. 141).

Persons in this phase are subjected to a "grinding down" process which is accomplished by "ordeals" such as "hazing, endurance of heat or cold, impossible physical tests in which failure is greeted by ridicule, unanswerable riddles which make even clever candidates look stupid, followed by physical punishment, and the like. But reducing down overlaps with reconstruction. The rebuilding process is by instruction, partly in practical skills, partly in tribal esoterics (learning the group's private teachings or secrets) and proceeds both by verbal and nonverbal symbolic means" (Turner in Moore & Myerhoff, 1977, p. 37-38). It is through these initiation rites that "the liminaries are humbled and leveled to make them fit for a higher status or state.... Humbling and submission to ordeal, whether inflicted by self or others, goes with preparation for elitehood..." being rebuilt into something new, becoming a member in full standing and assuming a position in the new group (p. 38-39).

Examples: Basic training - dress alike, look alike
Pledgeship periods for fraternities and sororities
Orientation events (freshmen wear distinguishing clothing

Comparison of liminality and normal social structure

Liminality	Normal Social Structure
transition	state
homogeneity	heterogeneity
communitas	structure
equality	inequality
anonymity	names
absence of property	property
absence of status	status
nakedness or uniform dress	dress distinctions
sexual continence or excess	sexuality
minimization of sex distinctions	maximization of sex distinctions
absence of rank	rank
humility	pride

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disregard of personal appearance	care for personal appearance
unselfishness	selfishness
total obedience	obedience only to superior rank
sacredness	secularity
sacred instruction	technical knowledge
silence	speech
simplicity	complexity
acceptance of pain and suffering	avoidance of pain and suffering (Turner, 1969).

3. Reaggregation or reincorporation is the third phase and involves the ritual subject or passenger being reintroduced to society, but in his or her new position. "The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a relatively stable state once more, and by virtue of this, has rights and obligations vis-a-vis others of a clearly defined and 'structural' type; he (or she) is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents or social position in a system of such positions" (Turner, 1969, p. 95). The passage is completed.

C. Purpose

Based on the above definitions, it is easy to see that we have many rituals, some formalized and common throughout our culture, others common within certain subcultures and ethnic groups and still others less formal and less common or only practiced within select subgroups. More important, perhaps, is the observation that rituals continue to be important as a means of defining who we are and giving meaning to our society.

Cultural characteristics

All cultures appear to separate childhood from adulthood and ours is no different. There remains the need to document the transition from childhood to adulthood.

Childhood is characterized as a period of maternal control, or one of dependency. Passage into adulthood has been marked variously throughout the last 200 years: "the age of marriage, the age at which a young man (person) left home for the final time, perhaps even the age at which one joined a church" (Kett, 1977, p. 31).

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Kett (1977) has documented clearly a description of the stages of life in this country from 1790 to 1977, especially as relates to adolescence. What becomes vividly clear is that there has been no consistent pattern during this period. Rather, spasmodic changes have occurred in the expectations associated with childhood and adulthood. Frequently these changes were initiated without forethought and indiscriminately determined by economic, social, political, educational, technological and other cultural factors.

Thus, "in the ensuing decades, (following the early 19th century) the idea of youth (or adolescence) as a period of prolonged indecision would rise to prominence" (Kett, 1977, p. 37). The stage was set for increased confusion and frustration. How could young persons demonstrate and adults measure their readiness for responsibilities. Multiple factors that impacted this have been identified by Kett (1977).

--The median age of the population in 1800 was 16; in 1950 it was 30.8, which represents a decrease in the proportion of American society composed of children and youth.
--Puberty is occurring earlier than in the 1800s--male 16, female 15; 1977--male 14, female 12; 1990--male 12-13, female 10.
--Pressure to decide vocational direction less in 1800s than now, less knowledge was needed to enter a vocation.
--Emphasis was on subordination of children as inferior members of the family hierarchy in the 1800s. Parents spelled out children's "duty" even as late as age 25 or more. Likewise, older siblings addressed younger siblings with similar admonitions.
--More formalized schooling emerged after the 1800s. School boards and teachers took on more authoritative roles.
--"College discipline revealed a near obsession with order at every turn" (p. 51).

The rules and standards for passing from childhood to adulthood changed and became delayed. There developed a much longer period of time when young persons were in transition. Because of the dramatic economic, political, educational, technological and other cultural changes that were taking place which involved and impacted the adults, and especially parents, little conscious attention appears to have been given, at first, to how this was impacting youth.

Emergence of the concept of adolescence

Although the concept of adolescence had been around for a long time, it took on new meaning in the 1800s. Concern with this stage of life, and the characteristics associated with it have continued to the present. As suggested earlier, "in the 20th

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Century a combination of technological advances and prolonged education has contributed to a stretching out of the period of dependency" (Kett, 1977, p. 144).

New structures (rituals) were needed to help occupy this increased time of dependency. One response was the formation of sponsored youth groups such as 4-H, scouts, and the YMCA. A middle-class youth sub-culture emerged. Another response was the initiation of youth gangs. "...gangs provided their members with a self-contained status hierarchy, an insulated world in which members won from their peers recognition of qualities ignored by school and society" (Kett, 1977, p. 257).

Kett (1977) identifies a further "analogy between the gang and the middle-class youth subculture. Not only did the behavior of each stand poised between conventionality and unconventionality, but in each case the type of unconventional behavior indulged in seems to have represented a pre-mature assertion of adulthood.... Also, ...both the gang and the middle-class youth sub-culture gave young people access to the Symbolism, if not always the substance, of adult status" (p. 263).

With this emergence, we now find youth during this prolonged period of adolescence seeking means by which they define their own liminality or transition rituals. Included in these is the use and abuse of alcohol.

Benefits and issues with alcohol use and abuse as a ritual

- Benefits:
  - Historical tradition
  - Cultural universality -- used world-wide
  - Economically lucrative to:
    - Farmers
    - Brewers
    - Distributors and Vendors
    - Healthcare System
  - Sedative/Stimulant
    - Dulls emotions/reduces fear
    - Gives courage/makes brave
    - Impairs judgement/rationality
    - Reduces pain, sense of hurt
    - Provides excuse for denial--not my fault
  - Easy to obtain
  - Easy to monitor (observe consequences)
  - Easy to measure outcomes
    - Quantity consumed vs subsequent behavior
    - Dexterity
      - Physical--walking, moving
      - Mental--thought processes, speech
      - Emotional--placid vs hostile

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Issues:

- Addictiveness--consumption becomes a goal in itself supersedes more reasonable and rational goals for achievement, e.g., lower order needs and self-fulfillment
- Non-satiating, use stimulates use of more dangerous substances
- Irrationalness--encourages unreasonableness, deficient in good sense, guidance by a force other than self-will, illogical, absurd, foolish and/or dangerous behaviors
- Expense--medically, property
- Illness--loss of productivity
- Destruction
  - Property
  - Persons
  - Relationships
- Lethargy--loss of energy and productivity
- Irresponsibleness--excuse for harmful behavior
- Impairs truthfulness

Implications of alcohol usage as a rite of passage ritual

What are the implications, then, if indeed alcohol is being used by our adolescents and young adults as a ritual in their passage rites? Perhaps the first question is, do we really care? As suggested earlier, based on the emphases at the national level and the multitude of programs at the state and local levels, the obvious answer would be yes. However, persons who work closely with these programs indicate that little progress is being made, and in fact, a national high school senior survey by Johnstone, Bachman and O'Malley (1989) reported that alcohol use has remained constant or continued (increased) (Mascari, 1990).

It is this evidence that the current approaches are not working that suggests that a different approach might be warranted. First, we must recognize that education and legislation are necessary but not sufficient. Second, we need to acknowledge as a culture that we truly want to do something about the problems of alcohol use and abuse. Third, we need to understand better the role(s) that rites of passage play in a society. And fourth, earnestly seek, with the input and involvement of youth, to develop meaningful and less dangerous rituals to assist youth in defining their movement from childhood to adulthood so that abuse of alcohol is minimized as a ritual in youth's passage to adulthood.

The critical question--REMOVE THE SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM OR TREAT THE CONSEQUENCES? (Story of people drowning in a river.)

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We as individuals, and as society as a whole can spend our time throwing life buoys to persons who are already in trouble, or having difficulty, or we can go up stream to divert the persons from falling into the river in the first place. This might be done by assisting young persons to design appropriately rigorous sanctioned initiation rituals and experiences to assist them to demonstrate their adultness as a part of their rites of passage to adulthood and membership in new groups.

A proposed alternative

Based on the evidence regarding the importance of rites of passage rituals in most societies, there is reason to believe sanctioned initiation rituals could reduce the number and the severity of unsanctioned peer and self designed rituals that result in serious permanent negative consequences. In other words, rather than trying to control and eliminate the dangers associated with initiations and other hazing types of activities by making them illegal and against institutional policies, our goals may be better served by purposefully designing and instituting appropriately rigorous rituals to meet these apparent inherent rite of passage socialization needs.

It appears obvious that alcohol currently plays a major role during the transition or liminal phase of the rite of passage for youth. Following is a selected list of characteristics of the liminal or transition phase in passage rites and some of the characteristics of alcohol use and abuse that fulfills some of the conditions of the liminal phase.

Selected characteristics of liminal phase:	Characteristics of alcohol use:
ambiguousness	dulls the senses
rolelessness	inability to assume responsibility
harassment	consumption of excessive quantities
endurance of heat and cold	attempt to match bravado perceived of adults
impossible physical feats	attempt dangerous challenges
encouraging violation of previous standards and values	pressure to drink to be part of group

Even a cursory perusal of the above lists makes obvious the attractiveness for using excessive consumption of alcoholic

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beverages in constructing rites of passage rituals. Important disadvantages of using alcoholic consumption rite of passage rituals are:

1. Addictiveness--has potential to create subsequent dependence on and abuse of alcohol
2. Increased tendency to use and abuse harder drugs
3. Physical effects--persons injure themselves, others, and property. Increase medical, liability and related costs.
4. Emotional impact--injures or destroys relationship and trust
5. Mental consequences--injures brain cells, confused mental functioning, impaired judgement

In view of the above information, it appears reasonable to consider using proactively the power and energy attendant with rites of passage rituals. Energy will be better spent and results will be more positive and long lasting it efforts are directed to develop and manage appropriate sanctioned rites of passage initiation rituals than to try to limit, control, and abolish passage rites. Listed below are examples of some of the characteristics of traditional rites of passage rituals.

Characteristics of liminality:	Reconstruction:
Ambiguousness	Instruction
Rolelessness	Practical Skills
Harassment	"Tribal" esoterics (group's private teachings)
Endurance of heat and cold	
Impossible physical tests	
Unanswerable riddles	

Based on an understanding of rites of passage characteristics, the role of the adult advisors is one of supervision and management, rather than developer and implementor of the passage rites. It will be important to involve the upperclass students in developing and designing appropriate rigorous liminal rituals and experiences for the initiates that can be sanctioned by the institution. This involvement in designing, implementing and monitoring the successful completion of the liminal rituals will be critical so the current members will accept the sanctioned rituals as appropriate measures for initiates to demonstrate their worthiness to become members of the new group.

In some societies which have clearly defined rites of passage rituals, the liminaries are assigned a mentor who are already members of the new group. These mentors' responsibilities are to help ensure, although not guarantee, that the liminaries will successfully accomplish the tasks required during the liminal period.

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Challenges to address in developing rituals that can be sanctioned:

1. broad age range of liminaries
2. instant communication
3. plurality of culture (society)
4. identifiable traditions
5. demise of identifiable nuclear group
6. something that is universally available
7. consequences for those who do not participate

The challenge, based on an understanding of the importance of rites of passage, is to help young people find or devise appropriate and rigorous rituals that will permit youth to demonstrate and prove their worthiness to be considered and accepted as members of their new groups, whether that be in junior high school, high school, college, the larger adult world or some subgroup within one of these classifications without resorting to dangerous addictive and permanently debilitating ritual activities. Officials working with youth to design, implement and monitor appropriate sanctioned passage rites offers a viable and constructive alternative to accomplish this challenge.

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Appendix 16

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